VISVA BHARATI

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Synopsis of Research Proposal Submitted
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ENTITLED

Sāṅkhya, Yoga and Advaita Vedānta
As
Theory of Consciousness

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Introduction:

Consciousness is one of the fundamental issues in Philosophy both in Indian as well as western traditions. However, there is hardly any unanimity regarding his nature and functions. The question about its nature is answered in both way: Descartes for example thought that mind (that is soul, consciousness) is the substance existent and active. On the other hand, Hume thought that there is nothing which could be properly called consciousness (soul) and nothing like a soul needs to be entertained. But he agreed to entertain the possibility of having a habit so that a category like "cause" can be explained. The great synthesis ushered in by Kant talk incessantly about "mind", "consciousness", and "soul"; but he refuses to entertain the possibility of answering the question "what is consciousness"?

In the last century, the dominant philosophy, Logical positivism, tried to follow the human tradition to eliminate terms like "Mind", "Consciousness", and "Soul" as (at best) logical construction. Psychology was replaced by behaviourism but most of research stopped as explaining the behaviour of dogs and monkeys. Soon however it was discovered that the basic premises of positivism, analyticity and reductionism, are both wrong.

On the other hand, there seems to be preponderance of evident from the research on language acquisition that there has to be a faculty, with its basic ability to construct infinitely and indefinitely correct linguistic strings and communicate with them. Such a faculty cannot be empirical but has to be a priori. The arguments surfaced that if reductionism is false and if overt language behaviour is taken as evidence, then we shall have to entertain the possibility of metaphysical stuff which makes the world. The famous Kaplan-Kripke-Donnellan view seems have given positive argument in favour of that.

A cursory reading of some of the contemporary literature seems to be confusing for a newcomer like me. Some authors are talking about mind. Some are talking about consciousness and some are talking about self (agent). Some like Chalmers are talking about conscious mind, some are talking about brain processes, some are talking about, some are talking about computer model and parallel processing, some are talking about mind as software of the brain. But at the end we shall have to answer the question: what makes the distinction between a talking machine and human being with typical human attributes and ambitions. In the process of incorporating computer model, software and similar concepts, old questions raised by Philosopher like Kant

are forgotten. I still find those question like “How is knowledge (Physics, Mathematics) possible?” Interesting and not at all sure modern theories even start answering the questions.

Translation of Yoga Sutra by Girindrasekhar Bose:

One interesting aspect of his interpretation is the claim that Upanishads do not say the same thing—they are not products of the same level of understanding. That’s why we find that there are so many levels of charactering the Brahman—like *annambrahma, pranbrahma* etc.

But the main proposal comes when he interprets *karma* and *rebirth*. For him *citta* is the central concepts of Indian psychology. It has two *vrittis—manas* and buddhi. With these two experiences is created from the external stimuli. But we also have *samaskara-s* and because of the *samaskara-s*, experience may be differently by different persons.

samaskara-s are also product of past karma. Therefore, past karma ultimately is the cause of the experience. These experiences in turn produce *pravritti-s* like greed. Fulfilment or lack of *pravritti-s* produces pain.

In western psychology people consider some state of ‘pain’ as aberrations then they go to the psychologists so that they may be cured by psychoanalysis. Bose proposes that is actually repaving one way of creating the experience with some other.

The Yoga view, in his opinion, actually proposes removing pain through destruction of *pravritti-s* and that amounts to seeing the *karma phala* as a construction. It does not allow the pure consciousness to reveal itself. Yoga prescribes method of *Dhyana*, *samyama* to destroy the *karma phala* by understanding it as mere construction. When ego is understood as pure consciousness, there remains no *karma* or *phala*. If life is understood as karma, the *phala* and *samaskara,* then that life is destroyed as soon as the Ego is understood as consciousness. That is death, but not bodily death, man can start again—that is *rebirth*.

The problem stated:

Chalmers proposed the new form of the question about consciousness—what it is like to be conscious? Later the question is further ramified to ask—how do physical processes in the brain give rise to the self-aware mind and to feelings as profoundly varied as love or hate, aesthetic pleasure or spiritual yearning? We are of the opinion that similar question was asked by Kant and our Samkhya, Yoga and Advaita Vedanta tradition. Arguably the answers provided by each school was different and it as a good question to ask—whether the respective answers satisfy philosophers like Chalmers?

We also want dwell on the question of distinction between mind and consciousness following Samkhya, Yoga, Advaita Vedanta and whether this can help defeat the functionalist.

At the same time, we also aware of the fact that both Samkhya and Yoga are dualist, but Advaita Vedanta is not. Does that give us any special advantage in matter of answering the question—what is to be conscious? Finally, we want to ask whether Advaita position that atman, as *chaitnya-swarup* actually the best answer.

In Samkhya system of *Purusa* and *Prakrrti* are discriminate *satta*. Change is as much the character of the *Prakrrti* as, changelessness of the *Purusa;* intelligence is the essence of the *Purusa*, whereas non-intelligence is the characteristic of the *Prakrrti*. So, the question is that how can *Purusas* and *Prakrrti* both are evaluating the world or *parinam* of *prakrriti*.

"Yoga as a system of mental discipline had originally existed independently of Samkhya, and that it was subsequently incorporated into the Samkhya school"[1]. "We find that in the Yoga sutra-s Isvara is but loosely introduce, more as a matter of traditional faith than as having a place in the system of philosophy."[2]

If we say about Kant in matter of consciousness, so we have to say that Kant agrees with function of conscious apart from brain process. But he did not say anything about consciousness.

[1] Yoga Philosophy- S.N. Dsagupta, p.245
[2] Yoga Philosophy- S.N. Dsagupta, p.245

If say about Chalmers, Ned Block, then they are discussed about conscious and try to give solution of question—what is to be conscious? Block discuss about A-consciousness and P-consciousness, and Girindresekhar Bose, first trained psychologist, so solving the psychological problem by psychoanalysis, search his answer in the circumstances of Samkhya, Yoga and Vedanta tradition.

Now my question is that modern western philosophers like Chalmers, Ned Block's proposal could be solved by following the traditional view of Samkhya, Yoga and Advaita Vedanta. Girindrasekhar Bose proposes to removing desire or solving the psychological problem, he wants through by analysis of Yoga system. Now my question, that is possible?

If the traditional view of Samkhya, Yoga and advaita Vedanta can answer or absorb some of the observations of modern consciousness study then we can construct Samkhya, Yoga and Advaita Vedanta as a theory of consciousness.

Methodology

Our basic methodology is to read to compare three schools- Contemporary theories of Consciousness (Chalmers, Clark, Functionalism), Kant (possibility of knowledge thought a priori construction) and Samkhya view which distinguishes three aspects viz. *manas*, buddhi and ahamkara apart from *indriyas* to see if this distinction helps us to answer basic question about mind (or brain) dualism on the one hand and advaita position—*atma* as gyanswarup—answer what it is to be conscious? About Samkhya, Yoga, Advaita Vedanta view, we shall look at the Samkhya arguments for dualism and possibility of *Purusa* or *Prakrrti* interaction, Yoga view of Ishwar to facilitate this interaction in the context of dualism.

It seems to me that it should be possible to incorporate the Samkhya-Yoga construction within the fame work of Advaita. Still we shall have to answer why instead of there, the Advaita decided to incorporate one more i.e., *citta* in the fame work of knowledge acquisition and its explanatory efficacy.

On the whole with my cursory reading of the literature in think it should be possible to interpret the Samkhya, Yoga, Advaita Vedanta view as theory of consciousness capable of addressing some of the contemporary problems.

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